

ible" geographic quotas are rarely, if ever, stigmatized for taking the place of academically superior students, Grob points out. Black or other minority students who benefit from affirmative action should not be stigmatized, either, he says.

Black Crime, Black Victims

"The Question of Black Crime" by John J. DiIulio, Jr., with commentaries by Glenn C. Loury *et al.*, in *The Public Interest* (Fall 1994), 1112 16th St. N.W., Ste. 530, Washington, D.C. 20036; "The State, Criminal Law, and Racial Discrimination: A Comment" by Randall Kennedy, in *Harvard Law Review* (April 1994), Gannett House, Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

Believing that America's criminal justice system is stacked against African-Americans at every turn, many black and white-liberal critics seek, in the name of civil rights, to constrain law-enforcement authorities in various ways. This stance works against the best interests of most black Americans, contend DiIulio, director of the Brookings Institution's Center for Public Management, and Kennedy, a Harvard law professor.

"America does not have a crime problem; inner-city America does," DiIulio asserts. Despite the widespread anxiety about crime, only seven percent of Americans polled in 1991 regarded crime as a major problem in their own neighborhoods, up just two percentage points since 1985. But among black Americans living in central cities, the percentage soared during the same period from 10 percent to almost 25 percent.

In the nation's 75 most

populous urban counties, blacks constituted 20 percent of the general population but 54 percent of all murder victims (and 62 percent of all defendants). In Washington, D.C., about three-fourths of all homicides between 1985 and 1988 involved young black males slaying other young black males.

Today's liberal reformers, Kennedy contends, do not recognize that the main problem is no longer "white, racist officials of the state, but private, violent criminals (typically black) who attack those most vulnerable to them without regard to racial identity." About 84 percent of the violent crimes committed by a lone black person, and nearly 90 percent of those committed by two or more blacks, are crimes against blacks. Black communities are not receiving "the equal *protection* of the laws," Kennedy insists, often because of a racist devaluation of black victims of crime but also partly because of misguided opposition to law enforcement.

DiIulio advocates a get-tough agenda: more police in inner city neighborhoods, and longer sentences for violent and repeat criminals. He also urges consideration of a more radical measure: taking inner city children out of "dysfunctional or crime-infested environments" and putting them in group



Civil rights pioneer Rosa Parks was added to the list of black crime victims in 1994 when a young black man assaulted and robbed her in her Detroit home.

homes or similar institutions.

Although skeptical about this last measure, Glenn Loury, an economist at Boston University, finds the case for longer incarceration of violent and career criminals "compelling." But he sees a huge obstacle in the way, namely, that law-abiding black Americans are ambivalent about their crime problem, and

understandably so. "The young men wreaking havoc in the ghetto are still 'our youngsters' in the eyes of many of the decent poor and working-class black people who are sometimes their victims. The hard edge of judgment and retribution is tempered for many of these people by a sense of sympathy for and empathy with the perpetrators."

Civilization vs. Culture

Writing in *Chronicles* (Sept. 1994), the noted historian John Lukacs laments the breakdown of American civilization.

There is plenty of "culture" thrown at children in our schools, but very little of civilization. We now have hordes of young people to whom not only the notions but the very words "civilization" and "civilized" are hardly known—at a time when more people mouth the word "culture" than ever before. . . .

When a civilization functions, so do its public institutions. A hundred years ago, American public schools, public hospitals, etc., were among the best in the world. Since that time the very sense of what is "public" has decayed: our public schools, public hospitals, public transportation are avoided and shunned by many people. But at least in one important respect there is no difference between those public schools where the young maim and occasionally murder each other and the most expensive of private institutions. All American schools are hardly more than custodial institutions now—to keep young people off the streets and away from home, and not only in the event that both of their parents are at work. . . . Whether in an inner-city school or at Harvard, the young are not taught civilization. I do not mean the teaching of good manners—that disappeared some time ago. (Though Goethe was right: there are no manners which do not have a moral foundation somewhere.) Nor do I mean the older American public school practice of teaching good citizenship. I mean a respect for life, for an orderly life that is inseparable not only from a respect for learning but from a respect for one's

provenance, for language, and for the ability to read, write, and listen. Almost half of our young now spend nearly 20 years in schools, with the result that most of them cannot read and write and express themselves adequately.

This has something to do with the propaganda about the Information Explosion. ("Explosion," with its destructive connotation, is the mot juste.) There is a breakdown of communication, part and parcel of the breakdown of civilization, an information "culture" that has nothing to do with information, for that requires listening. Since entire generations no longer know how to listen, we have this widening breakdown of communication (and, thus, of civility) between parents and children, husbands and wives, lovers, teachers and students, and so on. When "culture" can (as it already does) degenerate into mere entertainment, "civilization," too, can degenerate into mere telephoning.

Civilization includes paying attention to others. Rare that is now, particularly in the world of scholarship—or, as the cliché goes, in "the community of scholars." There is no such community. There is the old saw about the specialist who knows more and more about less and less. There was nothing very wrong with that. What we now have are academic bloviators who know less and less about more and more, while the majority of their colleagues read less and less and write (or, rather, process words) more and more. If that is culture, then the hell with it.

Ultimately, as DiIulio himself says, law-abiding blacks hold the key to solving the black crime problem. Kennedy sees a hopeful sign: a movement, "across the political spectrum and within black communities," toward giving more sympathy to the victims of crimes than to those who commit them.

School Choice for Some

"Somebody's Children" by Diane Ravitch, in *The Brookings Review* (Fall 1994), 1775 Mass. Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Since the early 1980s there has been wave after wave of education reform, yet the worst schools, the inner city schools so wretched and dangerous that they should not even be called schools, remain largely unchanged. Although she considers herself a supporter of public education, Ravitch, a Senior Research Fellow at New York University and a noted historian of education, says she has come around to the view that parents faced with such dreadful schools should be given a choice.

"The best solution I see," she writes, "is for states, cities, or the federal government to provide means-tested scholarships to needy families, who may use them to send their children to the school of their choice, be it public, independent, or religious." The size of the scholarship would vary according to family income, with needier children getting larger grants. "For the neediest, the grant should be at least equal to the state average per pupil expenditure. . . . Since funds will necessarily be limited, highest priority for such scholarships should go to children who are now enrolled in schools identified by public authorities as the worst in the district."

She proposes, in other words, a "liberal" version of the school-choice idea championed by some conservative reformers. Putting tuition money in the hands of the parents of "at risk" urban children would encourage creation of the sort of schools such youngsters need, Ravitch maintains.

"Whether public or private, the most successful urban schools share certain characteristics. . . . All have in common a sense of purpose, a mission, an identity of their own. And all function *in loco parentis*, with the knowledge and assent of parents who welcome a partnership with the school."

Fears that a "choice" program of the sort she advocates would destroy public education are groundless, Ravitch asserts, citing a survey showing that only 19 percent of all public school parents would like to send their children to a private school. "In a means-tested system, many of these families, of course, would not qualify for scholarships," she notes. The public schools would retain 80 percent or more of all students (instead of today's 90 percent). "Far from being destroyed," she concludes, "the public school system would be strengthened because it would be able to shut down bad schools."

Proto PC

"Political Correctness and American Academe" by Peter F. Drucker, in *Society* (Nov. 1994), Rutgers—The State University, New Brunswick, N.J. 08903.

The current attempt to impose an orthodoxy of "political correctness" on the American university is not unprecedented. The Stalinists did much the same thing during the late 1930s and early '40s, recalls Drucker, a professor of social science and management at Claremont Graduate School. The tactics then and now, he says, were quite similar: "intimidation, character assassination, hounding of 'resisters' and 'reactionaries,' denial of discourse and of freedom of thought and of speech." But academia then was a very different place—and, as a result, so were the radicals' strategic goals.

Today, Drucker says, the proponents of political correctness seek to gain control of colleges and universities. These institutions "have become power centers through control over the granting of degrees which, in turn, controls access to jobs and careers;